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Disarmament Commission

238th meeting

Tuesday, 27 June 2000, 3 p.m.

New York

Chairman: Mr. Zarif ..... (Islamic Republic of Iran)

In the absence of the Chairman, Mr. Estévez-López (Guatemala), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair

The meeting was called to order at 3.25 p.m.

General exchange of views (*continued*)

Ms. Ibraimova (Kyrgyzstan): At the outset, I would like to congratulate Ambassador Zarif on his election as Chairman of the Disarmament Commission and to express confidence that under his guidance we will achieve substantive progress and success at this session. My felicitations also go to the other members of the Bureau.

This body's successful adoption last year of principles and guidelines for the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones is to be commended. Negotiated nuclear-weapon-free zones now cover the whole of the southern hemisphere, in addition to Antarctica, the sea bed and outer space, and constitute one of the most promising approaches to non-proliferation and disarmament. In this regard, the significant progress that has been made towards creating a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central Asia is noteworthy. We in the Kyrgyz Republic believe that the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in our region will strengthen peace and security at the regional and global levels.

Since 1994, the Kyrgyz Republic has been an untiring and diligent participant in the process of establishing a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central Asia. At the 2000 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), Kyrgyzstan, together with Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, submitted a working paper on the Central Asian nuclear-weapon-free zone to Main Committee II. In paragraph 14 of the section of its Final Document on Article VII of the NPT and the security of non-nuclear-weapon States, the Review Conference supported the intention and commitment of the five Central Asian States to establish a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the region, welcomed the practical steps they had taken towards the implementation of the initiative, and noted with satisfaction the substantial progress they had made in drawing up and agreeing on a draft treaty on the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central Asia.

The Kyrgyz Republic would like to draw particular attention to the continued efforts, under United Nations auspices, of a working group on the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central Asia. In July 1998, the working group held a meeting in Bishkek involving the five Central Asian States, the five nuclear-weapon States, the United Nations and the International Atomic Energy Agency. The group has also held meetings in Geneva, Tashkent, New York and Sapporo, the most recent of which concluded in April 2000. As a result of these meetings, our States have produced an almost complete draft treaty establishing a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central Asia.

I would like to take this opportunity to express, on behalf of the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic, our sincere gratitude to the Member States which have

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been providing their firm support for the process of establishing a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central Asia. We are also very grateful to the Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, Mr. Dhanapala, the Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific, the International Atomic Energy Agency and the Government of Japan for their support of negotiations to establish such a zone. We would welcome the continued assistance of interested international organizations and States in this process. As a peace-loving country, Kyrgyzstan is dedicated to the cause of nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament, and will spare no effort to bring the work of creating a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central Asia to fruition.

Nuclear-weapon-free zones play a major role in strengthening the global non-proliferation regime. However, horizontal non-proliferation alone will not make this world more secure; it must be accompanied by vertical non-proliferation and the reduction of nuclear stockpiles, with a view to their ultimate elimination. The Kyrgyz Republic is pleased to note that in the Final Document of the 2000 NPT Review Conference, the nuclear-weapon States agreed to a set of practical steps for systematic and progressive efforts to implement Article VI of the Treaty. In particular, the Kyrgyz Republic welcomes the unequivocal undertaking by the nuclear-weapon States to accomplish the total elimination of their nuclear arsenals, leading to nuclear disarmament, and their commitment to unilateral reductions, increased transparency, reduction of the operational status of nuclear weapons systems, their diminished role in security policies and the further reduction of non-strategic nuclear weapons. The inclusion of non-strategic nuclear weapons is particularly noteworthy, and the Kyrgyz Republic shares the concern expressed by the Secretary-General in his report on the Millennium Assembly (A/54/2000) about the absence today of negotiations to reduce tactical nuclear weapons.

The commitment made by all States parties at the NPT Review Conference must now be implemented fully so as to ensure the vitality of the global non-proliferation regime. Kyrgyzstan attaches considerable importance to the full implementation of the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty of 1972, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 54/54 A adopted last year.

Regrettably, world security is not only threatened by the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction; conventional weapons, such as small arms, light weapons and mines, have become a major menace, causing millions of civilian casualties. Illicit trafficking in small arms is often linked to international terrorism, with destabilizing and destructive effects in many countries in every region of the world. These weapons threaten security, exacerbate violence, increase human suffering and hinder social and economic development and stability. They hamper the implementation of peace agreements, the reconstruction and rehabilitation of countries and the restoration of normal life.

The ongoing civil strife in Afghanistan and the presence of armed militant groups in that region raises the spectre of the possibility of a wider regional war. My delegation has always stressed that the harmful effects of that conflict, including international terrorism, drug smuggling and illicit trafficking in small arms, are not confined by national borders or limited to the parties directly involved in the conflict. Indeed, they spilled over into the southern region of my country last fall, demonstrating the reality of the threat that this conflict causes to the surrounding region and the possibility that it could again trigger events disruptive to peaceful societies trying to build regional cooperation and improve the lives of their people.

As it did last year, Kyrgyzstan, in cooperation with its allies, stands ready to firmly oppose any attempts at international terrorism of any nature and any attempts to undermine its sovereignty and territorial integrity. In this regard, we would like to emphasize the importance for regional security of regional organizations, such as the "Shanghai Five" and the Treaty on Collective Security. The Kyrgyz Republic reiterates its condemnation of international terrorism and calls on this body to redouble its efforts to control illicit trafficking in small arms as a means of combating international terrorism. In this regard, the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms, as well as regional initiatives such as the European Union Code of Conduct on Arms Exports and the Inter-American Convention against Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Ammunition, Explosives and Other Related Materials, ensure transparency and essential confidence-building measures. Kyrgyzstan fully supports these initiatives and commends the work of the Panel of Governmental Experts on Small Arms and appreciates its recommendations.

Our delegation welcomes the activities of the European Union Joint Action aimed at a comprehensive approach to small arms. We believe that technical and financial assistance to programmes related to the small arms problem, especially those of a preventive character, is of great importance. We also commend the practical disarmament measures undertaken by the group of interested States. The forthcoming United Nations conference on the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects will provide an important forum to translate our concern about these issues into concrete measures for their resolution.

My delegation notes with approval the guidelines on conventional arms control/limitation and disarmament adopted by this body at its previous session, and pledges its support during the present session for further measures aimed at controlling this dangerous threat to international human security.

In conclusion, my delegation hopes that the current session will build upon the progress achieved at the previous substantive session so as to further advance the important work of the Disarmament Commission. This will enhance the unique role of the Commission as a multilateral deliberative body on disarmament.

Mr. Enkhsaikhan (Mongolia): At the outset, I would like to extend my warmest congratulations to Ambassador Zarif on his unanimous election, and to pledge my delegation's full cooperation and support. We also congratulate all the other members of the Bureau, as well as the Chairmen of the Working Groups. I join previous speakers in expressing the gratitude of my delegation to Mr. Maged Abdel Aziz of Egypt for his contribution to the work of the previous session. My delegation would also like to thank Ms. Angélica Arce de Jeannet of Mexico for her efforts in preparing for this session.

Since the earliest stage of the establishment of the Disarmament Commission, the Mongolian delegation has attached great importance to this forum as an important international deliberative body in promoting the goals of arms control and disarmament at the regional and global levels. The fact that, as the Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, Mr. Dhanapala, said yesterday in this room, total world military expenditure increased by 2.1 per cent in real terms in 1999, amounting to approximately $780 billion, which represents 2.6 per cent of world gross national product, reinforces the need to make concrete progress in the field of disarmament. In this connection, my delegation believes that the Disarmament Commission is called upon to play, and should play, an increasing role.

This year, the Disarmament Commission has an important role to play, especially in the quest for agreements in two important areas. The first relates to ways and means to achieve nuclear disarmament, and the second to practical confidence-building measures in the field of conventional arms.

Nuclear disarmament with a view to the ultimate elimination of nuclear weapons is at the heart of the whole range of disarmament and non-proliferation issues. We believe that the pressing issues are bringing the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) into force as soon as possible, strengthening the non-proliferation regime and the further implementation of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), preserving the spirit of the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty, concluding a universal and verifiable fissile material cut-off treaty, and working out an effective verification regime for the Biological Weapons Convention.

My delegation joins other delegations in urging Member States and the parties concerned to spare no effort to achieve those objectives. In that context, Mongolia welcomed, as a promising sign for promoting nuclear disarmament, the recent ratification by the Russian Duma of the CTBT and the Treaty on Further Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms (START II). This provides an important impetus to further nuclear arms reduction. Implementation of START II would not only lead to a considerable reduction in the deployed strategic warheads of the two major nuclear Powers, but also facilitate the next phase: START III negotiations.

Also on nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation issues, I would like to stress the positive outcome of the recent 2000 Review Conference of the Parties to the NPT. Among its positive results, I would like to emphasize, in particular, the consensus reached by the States parties on further efforts towards the total elimination of nuclear weapons and curbing the spread of such weapons, as well as the unequivocal undertaking by all

nuclear-weapon States to make further efforts to reduce nuclear arsenals and non-strategic nuclear weapons.

Mongolia attaches great importance to the question of establishing nuclear-weapon-free zones as an important and valuable component of non-proliferation. It is this context that my country welcomed last year's adoption by the Disarmament Commission of the principles and guidelines on the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones, which would, in our view, further consolidate the existing zones and facilitate the establishment of new ones.

Mongolia is doing its part to contribute to strengthening the non-proliferation regime. In 1992, it declared its territory a nuclear-weapon-free zone. Today, Mongolia is working to strengthen its international security and its nuclear-weapon-free status in the light of General Assembly resolution 53/77 D, adopted in December 1998. A clearly defined and internationally recognized status for a territory almost the size of western Europe would be Mongolia's practical contribution to promoting the goal of strengthening the non-proliferation regime. In order to clearly define and institutionalize that status at a national level, last February our parliament adopted special legislation. The nuclear-weapon-free status, as well as the adoption of the national legislation, were welcomed and supported by the Secretary-General, and by the Non-Aligned Movement at its recent ministerial meeting in Cartagena. At present, my country is discussing, with the five permanent members of the Security Council, the form and content of security assurances that they could provide to Mongolia.

The second important current mandate of the Disarmament Commission is to identify and discuss practical confidence-building measures in the field of conventional arms. There are a number of issues of international concern. First of all, my delegation shares the legitimate concerns about the increase in the arms trade and the spread of conventional weapons, including small arms and light weapons, especially in areas of armed conflict. It is estimated that 90 per cent of all conflict-related deaths and injuries are caused by small arms. The majority of victims are members of the civilian population; surprisingly, 80 per cent of them are women and children. Therefore, my delegation welcomes the proposal to hold an international conference on the illicit arms trade in all its aspects in 2001, preparations for which are already under way.

Last year we welcomed the entry into force of the anti-personnel landmines Convention as an important step in conventional disarmament. Strict implementation of the Convention would substantially reduce human suffering in many regions of the world. Mongolia attaches great importance to the reduction, and indeed the elimination, of certain categories and types of conventional weapons. It believes, however, that a reduction in conventional armaments should be carried out bearing in mind the defence and security needs of States.

It is also my delegation's belief that a further reduction in military budgets and the arms trade of States and an increase in transparency would promote the confidence building that is necessary for placing limitations on and reducing conventional arms. We therefore believe that the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms should be further strengthened and that it should be observed by all States.

Finally, allow me to express the hope that the 2000 substantive session of the Disarmament Commission will lead to realistic and important practical measures. I would like to take this opportunity to assure the Chairman once again of my delegation's full cooperation in his efforts to bring the work of the session to a successful conclusion.

Mr. Mra (Myanmar): First of all, I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate Ambassador Zarif on his election as Chairman of the Disarmament Commission at its 2000 session. I am confident that under his experienced and able leadership, our deliberations will be fruitful. My congratulations go also to the members of the Bureau and the Chairmen of the two Working Groups. I would like to assure him of my delegation's fullest cooperation in making the work of this session a success. I would also like to thank the Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, Mr. Dhanapala, for the important statement he made at the beginning of this session, yesterday.

This year, the Disarmament Commission is taking up two important substantive items. The first relates to ways and means to achieve nuclear disarmament, and the second item, which is of no less importance, is on practical confidence-building measures in the field of conventional arms.

The session has also been shortened this year to two weeks of deliberations instead of the traditional three weeks. We should all endeavour to do our best to

achieve optimum results during the two-week period, and to come up with useful recommendations.

My delegation is of the view that, in seeking ways and means to achieve nuclear disarmament, nuclear non-proliferation plays a vital role. In this regard, Myanmar welcomes the successful outcome of the 2000 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). The statements made by the five nuclear-weapon States during the 2000 NPT Review Conference, reaffirming their willingness to pursue systematic and progressive efforts to reduce nuclear weapons globally, contributed positively to the outcome of the Review Conference in particular and to nuclear disarmament in general.

Ratification by the Russian Duma of START II was yet another welcome development. This historic initiative of the Russian Duma will pave the way for meaningful negotiations of START III between the United States of America and the Russian Federation.

The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) is one of the cornerstones of nuclear disarmament. Universal adherence to and effective implementation of the CTBT can prevent the further proliferation of nuclear weapons. That is why the early entry into force of the CTBT and universal adherence to it have become crucial.

In searching for ways and means to achieve nuclear disarmament, the early establishment of an ad hoc committee of the Conference on Disarmament to negotiate nuclear disarmament and the re-establishment of the Ad Hoc Committee on a fissile materials ban to commence negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty could contribute substantially towards nuclear disarmament. The establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones also constitutes an effective measure for preventing the geographical proliferation of nuclear weapons and contributes towards nuclear disarmament. Myanmar is accordingly supportive of all efforts to establish nuclear-weapon-free zones. It may be pertinent to mention here that Myanmar is a State party to the South-East Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty.

Although the convening of the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament (SSOD IV) has already been decided by the General Assembly, it has so far eluded consensus on its objectives and agenda. My delegation is of the view that the holding of such a session would allow us to review in a most comprehensive way all disarmament issues, including nuclear disarmament.

Since the end of the cold war, the proliferation of intra-State conflicts has riveted our attention on conventional weapons. Nowadays, numerous armed conflicts are being fought almost exclusively with such weapons. It is therefore most timely and appropriate that we discuss the question of confidence-building measures in conventional arms at this meeting. A number of initiatives have already been taken at the international, regional and national levels by Governments and non-governmental organizations to study the problems connected with conventional arms. These initiatives need encouragement and support to enable them to crystallize.

My delegation believes that, in handling the question of conventional arms, in view of its complexity, we should first focus our attention on some selected aspects of the problem, such as the illicit manufacturing, illicit trafficking and illicit use of small arms. My delegation is of the view that Member States have the legitimate right to manufacture, transfer and use small arms for their own security. In today's world, the illicit arms trade has become a matter of grave concern to the international community. It poses a serious threat to the peace and security of a State or region. The illicit arms trade, especially to insurgents operating within the territory of a sovereign State, should be prohibited at all costs. The convening of an international conference on the illicit arms trade in 2001 will provide us with the opportunity to discuss all aspects of the problem and to build a consensus on the issue.

In conclusion my delegation would like to reassure you, Sir, of our commitment to closely cooperating with you for a fruitful outcome of this session.

Mr. Arcaya (Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): Allow me to express our pleasure at your election, Sir, and at the election of the Deputy Foreign Minister of Iran, Mr. Zarif, to the chairmanship of the Disarmament Commission at the 2000 substantive session, as well as at those of the other members of the Bureau. We are convinced that his experience and wise leadership are sufficient guarantees of our progress on the issues before us. Similarly, we congratulate the Chairmen of the two subsidiary bodies, the

representatives of Argentina and Ghana, and to reiterate our readiness to cooperate with them in achieving the objectives that we have set for ourselves.

We also wish to thank Mr. Zarif's predecessor, Mr. Abdelaziz of Egypt, and Mrs. Maria Angélica Arce de Jeannet of Mexico, whose efforts facilitated the adoption of agreements on matters of procedure and organization for this substantive session. We also thank Under-Secretary-General Dhanapala for the ideas and proposals he raised yesterday morning, which we consider to be most valuable.

The Disarmament Commission is working in circumstances in which trends towards dialogue and cooperation on the international scene have gradually gained strength. Nevertheless, it is a paradox to note that, in the midst of apparently favourable conditions, the disarmament process has not registered the sustained progress in recent years that we have all been yearning for. Despite this, we are convinced that the current international system offers a timely opportunity to States to join their efforts to promote effective measures in the area of disarmament and arms control.

Nuclear disarmament being an unshirkable objective for all mankind, we harbour the hope that the results achieved at the sixth Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) will have a ripple effect in various forums and revitalize those bodies entrusted with considering these matters. In this respect, we feel that the unequivocal commitment made by the nuclear-weapon States to eliminate these systems could represent a step in that direction.

Although the Conference on Disarmament is still unable to define its programme of work, we trust that we will see an early start to the negotiation of a convention through which we will prohibit the production of fissile material and that this instrument will be ready in no more than five years.

With respect to the first substantive item on our agenda, "Ways and means to achieve nuclear disarmament", Venezuela feels that the international community can come up with various useful measures and proposals to smooth the way towards the reduction and ultimate elimination of nuclear weapons. In this context, we stress the initiatives promoted by the coalition of countries for a new nuclear agenda, the creation and consolidation of nuclear-weapon-free zones and the proclamation of the southern hemisphere and adjacent areas as a nuclear-weapon-free area. Furthermore, our delegation favours the proposal of the Secretary-General to convene an international conference to determine ways of eliminating nuclear dangers. Undoubtedly, the existence of a significant number of these weapons in a state of alert and the threat they pose to mankind are significant factors to be taken into account when we hold such a meeting.

Without underestimating the difficulties and hurdles that still lie ahead, we believe that at this session we can, in a flexible and constructive spirit, develop approaches for handling these matters. As noted, the Commission's characteristics as a decision-making body for formulating guidelines make this an appropriate forum for broad and objective discussion of these matters.

The delegation of Venezuela is particularly satisfied that Ms. Gabriela Martinic of Argentina has been elected to chair the Working Group on practical confidence-building measures in the field of conventional disarmament. This is one of the areas in which Latin America and the Caribbean have carried out major activities that have led to political and military initiatives to strengthen the climate of peace and stability in the region. The concept of confidence-building measures is thus not foreign to our countries. In that context, in recent years we have stepped up our efforts and, in the hemisphere, have promoted adoption of agreements in the field of conventional disarmament.

The adoption of the 1997 Inter-American Convention against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Ammunition, Explosives, and Other Related Materials and the Inter-American Convention on Transparency in Conventional Weapons Acquisitions are proof of the commitment of Latin America and the Caribbean to contribute to fostering a system of cooperative security.

Alongside the progress achieved at the regional level, it is encouraging to observe that measures have also been taken by the United Nations to enhance confidence in the area of conventional disarmament. In this regard, Venezuela continues its support for the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms and for the work of the Group of Governmental Experts on Small Arms.

Within that same context, my country attaches particular importance to the International Conference

on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in all its Aspects, to be held in 2001. That conference will offer States a political platform to combine their efforts to control and reduce the excessive accumulation of these arms, which, in the Secretary-General's words, represent a problem that affects human rights and development.

Finally, I wish to reiterate that, in our opinion, multilateral action is the most suitable way to promote solutions to problems of common interest which, because of their nature and scope, require a collective response based on dialogue and cooperation. In the field of disarmament, the United Nations, with its experience and credibility, represents the logical body to promote the adoption of disarmament and arms limitation measures aimed ultimately at strengthening peace and international security. For this reason, at a time of international change and transformation, the Disarmament Commission has an important role to play as a deliberative body in the formulation of recommendations and guidelines which can contribute to making solid progress in this area.

Mr. Dausá Céspedes (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, allow me to convey my warm congratulations to Ambassador Zarif on his well-deserved election to the chairmanship of the Disarmament Commission for the present session. His talent, experience and personality are very well known and will undoubtedly contribute to the success of our work. My congratulations go also to the other members of the Bureau.

For the first time, the Disarmament Commission will hold its session in a time-frame of only two weeks. Cuba did not oppose such a brief session, on the understanding that it would be exceptional and would set no precedents for the future. We should strictly comply with the General Assembly decision that the Commission should hold three-week sessions, which itself is a brief period of time bearing in mind the responsibilities of this organ and the number of issues before us.

The selection of the two substantive items on the Commission's agenda, which was adopted yesterday, turned into a long and tortuous process that could be completed only just prior to the opening of the Commission's session. Looking to the future, we must keep working to find a more efficient mechanism for selecting Commission items in order to avoid the excessive exhaustion that characterizes the present system.

This session of the Commission will be innovative in various other aspects related to General Assembly decision 52/492. For the first time, the rolling consideration of two items, which will always include a nuclear disarmament item, will be implemented. Likewise, the calendar of meetings will be prepared with a view to not holding simultaneous meetings of subsidiary bodies. This will make it possible to give the smaller delegations broader possibilities for action , while forcing us to make more efficient use of the available time.

Despite the recommendations made by the General Assembly, we regret that it was not possible on this occasion to elect the Chairpersons of the Working Groups early enough for them to hold inter-sessional consultations. That would have been particularly useful to expedite the beginning of the present session, because of its limited duration. We hope that the Chairpersons of the Working Groups will be able to conduct timely consultations during future inter-sessional periods.

Three decades after the entry into force of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), the nuclear Powers recently decided — not without difficulties — to make a their commitment to the elimination of nuclear weapons. In short, they have recognized the existence of article VI of that Treaty. That situation would be almost laughable if it did not reveal how little has been achieved on nuclear disarmament.

It is paradoxical that some, fortunately few, are almost ecstatic about the outcome of the sixth Review Conference of the Parties to the NPT when there are still no practical agreements guaranteeing the elimination of the 35,000 nuclear weapons which continue to jeopardize the very existence of humankind. There can be no place for complacency so long as eloquent words and phrases are spoken and no change is made to the New Strategic Concept of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, which not only fails to decrease, but actually increases, the role of nuclear weapons in security policies.

There are still many other questions on certain countries' true intentions concerning disarmament. We see, for example, a lack of political will to begin negotiations on nuclear disarmament in the Conference

on Disarmament; the decision of the United States Senate not to ratify the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT); and the possibility that the United States might establish a national anti-missile defence system, in flagrant violation of the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty.

We think it appropriate that, from the very outset, the Working Group on ways and means to achieve nuclear disarmament should take into account the many proposals that have been presented in the last few years. Among them, just to mention a few, are the proposals of the group of 28 delegations, members of the Group of 21 to the Conference on Disarmament, the report of the Canberra Commission, and the relevant resolutions that the General Assembly adopts year after year.

Although it is said that the cold war is over, we all are aware of the unsafe and tense world climate and of the situation that some regions and countries are going through. That is why the formulation of guidelines on confidence-building measures in the field of conventional arms must stem from the basic principle that the initiatives applicable to one scenario may not work in others. Indeed, in some cases, the mechanical implementation in one region of experiences from another can harm the security environment. Respect for each region's characteristics and the consent of the States of the region are prerequisites for the implementation of any measure.

Genuine confidence-building must include many conditions, among them the following: the elimination of the military threats to which some States are subject; the elimination of categories of weapons that are a threat and can be used only offensively; the reformulation of military doctrines that are conceived to intimidate other States; addressing and eliminating non-military security threats, such as poverty and underdevelopment; an end to military exercises near the borders of other States, except by consent of the State in question; the provision of guarantees by the main military Powers with respect to the agreements adopted by a given region; and respect for State sovereignty and for the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations.

In contrast to the situation with respect to nuclear disarmament issues, the Disarmament Commission has in past years adopted a considerable number of documents on conventional weapons. To avoid duplication of work that has already been done, the scope of the work to be carried out by the Working Group on confidence-building measures in the field of conventional arms will have to be adequately defined.

In conclusion, I would like to reaffirm that Cuba will continue to cooperate actively and constructively in the search for solutions to the problems in the field of disarmament. With that in mind, the Cuban delegation is ready to contribute as best as it can to the success of the present session of the Disarmament Commission.

Mr. Valdivieso (Colombia)*(spoke in Spanish)*: The prospects for the overall process of disarmament were rather discouraging at the start of the year. However, as several delegations have already mentioned, a number of events have given rise to a certain degree of optimism. Undoubtedly, the Russian Federation's ratification of the START II Treaty and of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) constituted significant progress in the process of nuclear disarmament.

Similarly, the successful outcome of the 2000 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), during which Colombia had the honour of chairing Main Committee I, and particularly the commitment of nuclear States to the elimination of nuclear weapons, seemed to give a new boost to the disarmament process. Furthermore, some regional tension has abated, as we see in the rapprochement of the two Koreas, symbolized by the recent encounter of their two leaders; we hope this process will continue.

We also note the withdrawal of Israel from southern Lebanon, which took place in relative calm and in which both parties showed great responsibility. This is further positive news in an area that has been marked by conflict for more than 50 years.

Positive events such as these might seem to have left the Commission with nothing to talk about. There is a feeling among certain delegations that the effort made during the NPT Review Conference exhausted the possibilities of nuclear disarmament deliberations, as we could see during the consultations to organize the Disarmament Commission's substantive session.

Nevertheless, my delegation regrets that the Commission was unable to reach an agreement on an analysis of missile proliferation. Yet the main

international security concerns at the present time are related to the development of missile technology, and to its proliferation among various countries and in zones of great tension. We could see this at the last session of the First Committee of the General Assembly, where several new draft resolutions on this matter were submitted. My delegation feels that, even though this is a controversial topic, it should not be taboo, and that this Commission, as a deliberative rather than a negotiating body, ought to be the forum for airing the concerns of all parties in this area.

The summit of heads of State or Government of the Permanent Mechanism for Consultation and Concerted Political Action, the Rio Group, which was held in Cartagena from 14 to 16 June, stated that nuclear disarmament was the responsibility of all States, primarily those that possess nuclear weapons, and indicated its satisfaction with the outcome of the Review Conference. My delegation feels that we should take advantage of the positive results of that Conference to boost the nuclear disarmament process. We also hope that this would make it possible to achieve prompt consensus in the Conference on Disarmament on a programme of work. This new Disarmament Commission cycle should take into account the results of the NPT Review Conference in considering ways and means to achieve nuclear disarmament.

Colombia considers that complete elimination of nuclear weapons should continue to be the objective, and that we should try to reach that objective in the near future. The deliberations of the Disarmament Commission on this new topic should bolster the process of nuclear disarmament, and should seek the building of consensus in this regard.

With respect to the item on practical confidence-building measures in the field of conventional arms, the Commission adopted a set of guidelines almost 15 years ago. The world has changed since then, and the international security situation is not the same, although we cannot say that it has improved. A review of current guidelines could be timely, but it should not be the only objective of the Working Group. Colombia understands security as a collective, not an isolated individual concept. In this respect, the promotion of confidence-building in the field of conventional arms is fundamental.

My delegation would like finally to reiterate the importance that we attach to the Disarmament Commission as a universal forum for the discussion of disarmament issues. The Commission has an important role to play in building consensus on disarmament matters and, by extension, international security.

I would like to assure the Chairman that he can count on my delegation's cooperation and participation so that our work can progress smoothly.

Mr. Shamshad (Pakistan): First of all, allow me to congratulate Mr. Javad Zarif on his election as the Chairman of this year's substantive session of the Disarmament Commission. Knowing him personally, as I do, I am delighted at the high personal esteem in which he is held at the United Nations. I also wish to congratulate the other members of the Bureau on having been elected to steer the work of the Commission this year.

This session of the Disarmament Commission is taking place against the backdrop of an international situation characterized by tumult and flux. The cold war ended a decade ago, and the period since then — for want of a better phrase — has been termed the post-cold-war period. However, as the events of last year demonstrated, the world is moving into a different and even more complex situation that we might call the post-post-cold-war period. The grand expectations — for a peace dividend, the resolution of all disputes, an end to the pursuit of hegemonistic policies, tangible movement towards nuclear disarmament and cooperative multipolarity — have not come true. The window of opportunity for genuine progress towards nuclear disarmament afforded by the end of the cold war seems to be closing, and we seem to be living with thousands of nuclear weapons in an uncertain world.

We feel that the agenda for this year's session is rooted in the current realities and provides the potential for substantive and serious deliberations. Having spent so much time and energy in finalizing the agenda items, we hope that all of us can work hard and show the necessary flexibility to successfully negotiate agreed guidelines.

During the past decade, a few successes notwithstanding, the progress towards nuclear disarmament has been rather slow and negligible. In fact, there are a host of negative developments that lend an air of pessimism to the nuclear disarmament scene. These include new doctrines and concepts

placing increasing emphasis on nuclear weapons; the risk of the possible use of nuclear weapons against non-nuclear-weapon States; moves for the amendment or abrogation of the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty, which could trigger a new build-up of nuclear weapons; the proposed deployment of future missile defences in regions of heightened tensions, including in South Asia; and nuclear testing in laboratory conditions to improve and refine nuclear weapons, which is contrary to the objectives and spirit of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). This list could go on and, therefore, concerns about the gradual erosion of the global disarmament framework are not misplaced.

The nuclearization of South Asia is now a reality. We regret that South Asia went nuclear in spite of our serious and sincere efforts to prevent this. India's nuclear tests and its subsequent hostility and bellicosity left Pakistan with no choice but to conduct its own nuclear tests to restore the strategic balance in the region and to avert the risk of a disastrous conflict in the face of nuclear blackmail. Any objective discussion on the problem of nuclear weapons in South Asia has to factor in the reactive nature of Pakistan's policy and the real issues of peace and security in our region.

In this regard, we note with regret that the Final Document of this year's Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), while offering comments on South Asia, failed to make the crucial distinction between the ambitions of India and the compulsions of Pakistan. It would have been only appropriate had the Review Conference devoted at least a part of its deliberations to identifying the causes of non-realization of the NPT goals and objectives and the events that struck a blow to non-proliferation norms in South Asia.

As part of its traditional policy of restraint and responsibility, Pakistan two years ago proposed to India a comprehensive strategic restraint regime covering mutual nuclear and conventional arms restraint, as well as peaceful resolution of differences and disputes. India, in addition to rejecting our proposal on a strategic restraint regime, is also reneging on confidence-building measures earlier agreed between the two countries. India test-fired a short-range surface-to-surface Prithvi missile on 16 June, and did not provide any prior notification of this test to Pakistan — which is contrary to the terms of the bilateral understanding between the two countries. The announcement by India of a draft nuclear doctrine envisaging the operational deployment of a triad of nuclear forces, that is, a huge arsenal of land-, air- and sea-based nuclear weapons, is also a source of grave concern to the States of the region.

Pakistan attaches great importance to the promotion of conventional arms control at the global and the regional levels. We agree that although nuclear weapons pose the threat of global annihilation, it is conventional weapons that continue to be used in scores of conflicts that afflict various parts of the world. The conventional arms race also consumes the vast majority of the resources expended by rich and poor nations alike. After an encouraging decline in the outlays on conventional weapons in the immediate aftermath of the cold war, there is now the danger of a revived emphasis on the build-up of conventional armaments and armed forces, for several reasons. These include the unfortunate proliferation of conflicts and wars in various parts of the world; the growing divergences in the strategic priorities and perceptions of some of the major Powers; the ambition for regional hegemony by the so-called new aspirants to great-Power status — which is so clear in South Asia, where one country, in spite of its overwhelming superiority in conventional arms, has hiked its defence budget by 28 per cent this year alone; technological progress, which has made the acquisition of new weapons and modes of warfare feasible and irresistible for the military-industrial complexes of at least some powerful States; and, finally, the unrestricted sale and supply of sophisticated weapons by certain major arms-producing countries.

Conventional arms control efforts can be made particularly meaningful if efforts are made against the creation of serious arms imbalances in sensitive regions of the world. These imbalances can occur if some regional States resort to large-scale acquisition or production of armaments while others in the region are denied the ability to match such acquisitions. Such imbalances will only heighten the insecurity of smaller States. They could also compel the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

Conventional arms control covers the whole spectrum of different types of arms. While there is growing international focus on small arms, in our discussions we need to pay more attention to highly advanced, lethal conventional armaments in the hands

of a few powerful States, as well as to the build-up of naval arms. It may be pertinent to mention that some of the next generation of conventional armaments may achieve the destructive potential of a small nuclear bomb.

In conclusion, my delegation once again assures the Chairman and the Bureau of its fullest cooperation in making our deliberations successful.

Mr. Apunte (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): Allow me, on behalf of my delegation, to congratulate Ambassador Zarif on his election to preside over our work, as well as the other members of the Bureau. We would also like to extend our congratulations to the representatives of Argentina and of Ghana on their election to chair the two Working Groups.

The most recent Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), which was held in April and May, highlighted the importance placed by the international community on nuclear disarmament, and laid the basis for achieving a formal commitment by the nuclear-weapon States to eliminate those weapons in accordance with article VI of the NPT. The establishment within the Conference on Disarmament of an ad hoc committee with the mandate to negotiate on nuclear disarmament, is an important step in this respect, and we hope that the Committee will be able to help overcome the inertia that has characterized the Conference in recent years.

A positive outcome to the work of this Commission would undoubtedly ensure that the optimism with which the NPT Review Conference closed did not fade away, but, on the contrary, provided an impetus for us to draw up appropriate principles on the two substantive items before us.

In this respect, the Final Document agreed upon at the NPT Review Conference identifies some of the elements aspects that should be taken into account in designing a strategy for the reduction and elimination of nuclear weapons. However, this should not prevent us from further examining the important points of view that were presented by various delegations, in particular those of the countries members of the New Agenda Coalition, which my delegation supports.

We trust that the nuclear-weapon States will make even greater efforts for the progressive elimination of their nuclear arsenals, deactivate those that are in a state of alert and commit themselves to negotiating a treaty on the complete prohibition on fissile material for nuclear weapons, which, among other commitments, are included in the Final Document of the Review Conference.

I should like to refer to the part of the Final Document of the Review Conference dealing with nuclear-weapon-free zones, which endorses the agreement that we reached in the Commission last year, to which my delegation attaches a great deal of importance. Nuclear disarmament should be complemented by measures and initiatives on conventional disarmament; the second substantive item on our agenda thus assumes particular importance. Ecuador will support any measure that would build confidence in the area of conventional arms. In the past, we supported the initiative of former President Oscar Arias to declare a moratorium on the purchase of high-technology weapons. We are a party to the Inter-American Convention on Transparency in Conventional Weapons Acquisitions, and we believe that we still have an opportunity to improve procedures and build confidence through the improvement of conventional arms registers, among other mechanisms.

In this area, we can make efforts at the regional, subregional and bilateral levels. Transparency in weapons acquisitions, information exchanges, disarmament and arms limitation agreements, the search for regional balance, participation in joint verification or monitoring activities, streamlined and transparent bilateral communication channels between military and civil forces, and border security commitments, among many other measures, are all valuable tools for improving trust among States.

Finally, my delegation views with particular interest the Secretary-General's proposal, contained in his report on the Millennium Assembly (A/54/2000), to convene an international conference to help identify ways to eliminate nuclear dangers.

The Chairman can rest assured of my delegation's cooperation during this session.

Mr. Osei (Ghana): My delegation shares the warm sentiments conveyed by previous speakers to the Chairman, on his election to steer the deliberations of the substantive session of the Disarmament Commission, and to the other members of the Bureau. He can rest assured of our full support and cooperation in his work to bring our session to a fruitful conclusion.

I should like to take this opportunity to comment the Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, Mr. Dhanapala, for his lucid, detailed and constructive statement, which, in my delegation's view, throws considerable light on our work over the next two weeks. Indeed, in our drive to achieve common security, we need to learn from history. As the Disarmament Commission is a deliberating body only, our relevance lies in the very *raison d'être* of our mandate: to deliberate on the work of the various bodies of the United Nations disarmament machinery and to make recommendations on ways and means to achieve nuclear disarmament, as well as to identify practical confidence-building measures in the field of conventional arms. It behoves us to work to achieve not merely a paper consensus, as the Under-Secretary-General put it, but to ensure that our efforts fully augment or complement the process of achieving international peace and security.

The timing of our session, coming as it does on the heels of the 2000 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), is propitious, for it is now generally acknowledged that the results of the NPT Review Conference will be significant for maintaining and strengthening nuclear non-proliferation, which is necessary, and for promoting nuclear disarmament in future. These results were made possible because States demonstrated the necessary political will, flexibility and commitment to the process.

This body, the Disarmament Commission, can also do no less than take advantage of the prevailing disarmament mood and work diligently to sustain the momentum achieved at the Review Conference. This is especially true as we are holding our first Disarmament Commission session of the new millennium at a time when the international community is seeking new avenues for overcoming threats to overall peace and security. Indeed, the realm of disarmament, which is critical to that search by the international community, lies at the heart of the efforts of the United Nations to maintain and strengthen international peace and security.

Ghana has a long history of involvement in nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation. Indeed, in 1963, our first President, the late Mr. Kwame Nkrumah, led the first-ever protest march in Africa, across the Sahara, against nuclear tests in that area. Since then we have participated in various disarmament forums. We have demonstrated our commitment to the disarmament process by signing and ratifying most of the multilateral conventions on disarmament, notably the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. As a signatory of the more recent Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction — the Ottawa Convention — we have just completed the process of ratification. Our instrument of ratification, dated 23 February, will shortly be deposited with the Depositary.

It is against that background that we welcome the Secretary-General's proposal on the convening of an international conference on disarmament. That, in our view, would go a long way towards building confidence in the process that is under way, and would help galvanize the necessary commitment and political will for the work ahead.

As a Member State from a subregion that has become very prone to conflict, Ghana views with concern the illicit trade in and the proliferation of small arms. The Secretary-General has noted in his report on the Millennium Assembly that

> "The death toll from small arms dwarfs that of all other weapons systems — and in most years greatly exceeds the toll of the atomic bombs that devastated Hiroshima and Nagasaki. ... Yet there is still no global non-proliferation regime to limit their spread, as there is for chemical, biological and nuclear weapons". (*A/54/2000, para. 238*)

That is a perception that my delegation shares. We also agree with the Secretary-General that small arms proliferation is not merely a security issue; it is also an issue of human rights and of development, since, *inter alia*, it exacerbates conflicts.

In that connection, we have strongly supported and commended the Economic Community of West African States moratorium on importing, exporting and manufacturing light weapons in West Africa. Last year, building on that subregional initiative, Ghana hosted a regional workshop on small arms, which set out the modalities for the establishment of an arms register to control the flow of arms into the region. The United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, to be held in 2001, will thus be a step in the right direction, and we

look forward to working with other Member States during the preparatory process for that conference.

Let me reiterate a point I made earlier in this statement, which I believe has also been made by other delegations. This session is the first of the new millennium, the first after the positive outcome of the 2000 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, and the first of three sessions of the Disarmament Commission in the present agenda cycle. Our prayer is that we will all contribute to laying a foundation that will make the work of the Disarmament Commission relevant to the process of disarmament in the twenty-first century.

Mr. Widodo (Indonesia): At the outset, let me express my delegation's congratulations to Mr. Javad Zarif on his unanimous election to the chairmanship of the Disarmament Commission. We are aware of his dedication to the cause of disarmament, and thus remain confident that under his able guidance our deliberations will be brought to a successful conclusion. Our congratulations go also to the other members of the Bureau on their election.

As this is the first session of the Disarmament Commission in the new millennium, my delegation deems it important that we assess our past endeavours, learn from those experiences and renew our commitment to arms limitation and disarmament. The continuing and heightened nuclear arms race, nuclear proliferation and the accumulation of conventional weapons have created serious challenges. The post-cold-war era, however, offers a new climate for concerted action and new opportunities. The global community, which has undergone profound change and transition, has a solemn obligation at this particularly critical juncture to embark upon a realistic course of action that will build on past achievements.

It is against that backdrop that this year's session of the Disarmament Commission has been convened. The very fact that the recently concluded 2000 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) was able to end with a consensus agreement fully reflects that sense of realism. Nuclear and related issues were dealt with in a comprehensive manner. Significantly, the Conference pointed the way towards the creation of a nuclear-free world through the identification of appropriate modalities leading to an end to the division of the world into nuclear haves and nuclear have-nots.

Those positive developments have also reaffirmed the importance of nuclear disarmament, as demonstrated by the submission of various proposals by groups of States such as the non-aligned countries and by authoritative forums such as the Canberra Commission on the Elimination of Nuclear Weapons and the Tokyo Forum for Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament. The main focus of those proposals is on: the NPT; nuclear-weapon-free zones; safeguard of fissile materials; non-first-use of nuclear weapons; reinforcement of bilateral agreements between the Russian Federation and the United States; drastic reductions of nuclear arsenals; the elimination of tactical weapons; the call for demilitarization; and an effective way of dealing with the myriad of nuclear issues.

Taken together, those proposals call for an unequivocal commitment to a nuclear-weapon-free world, which would enhance international security; for preparing the ground for more drastic cuts in nuclear armaments; and for bolstering efforts to eliminate those weapons. In Indonesia's view, they contain realistic and achievable proposals to ensure that the international community need not endure the frightening prospect of the indefinite possession of nuclear armaments. Equally important, they call for multilaterally negotiated instruments to make nuclear weapons reductions irreversible and to move forward to their internationally verifiable abolition.

It is gratifying to note that the number of nuclear weapons has continued to drop in the post-cold-war era. Some nuclear-weapon States have stated their intention not to produce fissile materials for weapons purposes and to place their military stockpiles under International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards. Cooperation among those States has been intensified to reduce the nuclear threat. The entire southern hemisphere is now a nuclear-weapon-free zone.

Although these are commendable achievements, there have been no negotiations for the past several years on strategic or tactical nuclear weapons. Further compounding the situation is the reaffirmation of certain strategic doctrines, and the threat of use of nuclear weapons even against non-nuclear States, as well as the lack of transparency with regard to the number of nuclear weapons and to quantities of nuclear material.

My delegation remains hopeful that at this session the Disarmament Commission will focus attention on the formulation of ways and means to achieve deep, irreversible reductions in nuclear stockpiles, the consolidation of existing nuclear-weapon-free zones, and transparency on nuclear and other related issues.

Nuclear weapons pose unacceptable dangers. Indefinitely retaining them involves the risk of further proliferation and, sooner or later of use, either by design or by accident. In this regard, the Secretary-General's proposal to convene an international conference to explore ways and means of reducing such dangers is worthy of our serious consideration.

As far as the second substantive item on our agenda is concerned, it is clear that because of the nuclear threat to human civilization, nuclear disarmament must continue to be accorded the highest priority. Yet we cannot fail to note that since the end of the Second World War, an estimated 2 million people have lost their lives in some 150 armed conflicts fought with conventional weapons; current trends do not give any reason to believe that there will be a decrease in the incidence or the severity of such conflicts. More than four fifths of the world's total expenditure for military purposes is spent on conventional arms and armed forces. Therefore, the situation concerning conventional armaments is a source of increasing concern.

The resources devoted to huge arsenals — nuclear and conventional — take up the funds that could be devoted to economic development and social progress, which is of great importance to the people of developed and developing countries alike. In this light, as efforts are made to achieve nuclear disarmament, the international community should focus attention on effective measures to reduce conventional armaments in order to divert the resources now spent on war to socio-economic advancement.

Although confidence-building measures — whether they be military, political, economic, commercial, cultural or humanitarian — are no substitute for concrete disarmament measures, they can play an important role in progress towards disarmament. They can contribute to creating a climate conducive to trust and confidence, whether they are taken unilaterally, bilaterally or multilaterally. By fostering an atmosphere of improved international relations, they can facilitate the adoption of measures to limit conventional arms and armed forces.

An important category of confidence-building measures relates to the military aspects of security, which, it must be emphasized, differ between regions and even within regions. These include the exchange of information, communication, notification and mutual observation of military activities, and measures to facilitate verification procedures. Related measures call for restraint in military activities to alleviate fear and to remove sources of tension and the possibility of surprise attack.

Negotiations on arms limitation and reduction offer unprecedented opportunities for the establishment of confidence-building measures. Conversely, multilateral arms-control discussions should include not only confidence-building measures, but also agreements to moderate the flow of armaments into a region. Taken together, that would create an environment conducive to the reduction of weapons through negotiations.

The confidence-building process in South-East Asia is growing and becoming more specific, and it can be said to be developing a concrete character, as epitomized by the establishment of the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) Regional Forum (ARF) in 1994. Its prime objective is to create and maintain confidence among the participating countries. As such, it has played a positive role in enhancing mutual understanding and trust, promoting greater transparency and strengthening the commitment among participants to maintain the climate of peace and stability in the region. The ARF may turn out to be the ultimate confidence-building measure in that part of the world.

Indonesia views the availability of relevant information as an essential prerequisite for establishing mutual confidence and thereby facilitating the process of disarmament. While some of the notable achievements in confidence-building measures have been in the context of Europe, these have assumed increasing importance for the Asia-Pacific region, where endemic conflicts, as well as persistent mistrust and miscommunication, have frustrated the initiation of arms-reduction talks for so long.

In this regard, proposals for confidence-building measures on land and sea, such as a reduction in the frequency and size of military exercises and a

multilateral instrument to govern incidents at sea, merit careful attention. Equally important would be the elimination of certain types of weapons, restraint in armament acquisitions, and limitation of deployment by external Powers in strategically important areas and waters.

While realizing that for the time being there may be scant opportunity for such formal arms-reduction negotiations and agreements in the Asia-Pacific region, there is scope for the initiation and implementation of selective confidence-building measures. Some concrete measures in this respect could be considered, such as the establishment of a consultative mechanism for the initiation and implementation of arms-control and disarmament agreements; regular exchanges of data among the major Powers and regional countries on their respective military budgets, doctrines and future force protection; the publication and exchange of information on military activities and other matters related to mutual security; the gradual reduction of military budgets on a mutually agreed basis; measures to strengthen the security of non-nuclear-weapon States; disengagement and separation of forces; constraints concerning military options; and the fostering of mutual confidence through joint regional endeavours in a spirit of common responsibility and amity.

These measures should be bolstered by transparency in international transfers of conventional arms, which is an important component of confidence-building measures, arms limitation and disarmament. This would encourage restraint arms export and import policies. The United Nations Register of Conventional Arms was established as a voluntary repository of data on major international conventional arms transfers. Since its inception in 1992, what is recorded in the Register from the Asia-Pacific region has been constant. Parallel to this effort, our attention should be focused on enhancing the role of the United Nations as the repository of objective data through the collection, compilation and dissemination of information on military matters.

The series of agreements on border-related confidence-building measures reached in the recent past between various States and groups of States in the Asia-Pacific region is particularly noteworthy. These accords are between well-armed States that have fought with each other in the not-too-distant past over disputed boundaries. Such agreements merit our commendation; if implemented, they will facilitate even more cooperative arrangements.

It is also pertinent to note that region's flashpoints in the maritime domain; these raise the question of whether sustained efforts should be exerted regarding maritime confidence-building measures and conflict settlement. Singapore and Malaysia deserve credit for taking their dispute over an island to the International Court of Justice. Indonesia and Malaysia have done likewise. Indonesian-sponsored workshops have made steady progress on the South China Sea dispute, while an indicator of success in this regard would be whether the States involved opt for cooperative settlements and resource-sharing agreements.

An Asia-Pacific regional consensus accommodating the vital interests of all States is essential to address questions of conventional armaments. ASEAN and the South Pacific Forum have the potential to develop such a consensus.

Further exploration of existing and new concepts has become imperative. Confidence-building measures have proven their utility. Whether the new millennium sees further progress or regrettable backsliding, the new Government of Indonesia and its new leaders are, nonetheless, determined to place greater emphasis on the proper implementation of confidence-building measures, as well as on dialogue and negotiations to peacefully resolve conflicts between nations. That was the central theme of a speech delivered by President Wahid during a panel discussion on "Dialogue among Civilizations: Towards a Culture of Peace" held at United Nations Headquarters on 13 June of this year. Indonesia will continue its efforts, in concert with others, to build upon existing confidence-building measures in a pragmatic way and to pave the way for more steps in that direction for the mutual benefit of all countries in our region.

Mr. Thapa (Nepal): Let me affirm my delegation's sincere congratulations to Ambassador Zarif on his assumption of the chairmanship of the 2000 substantive session of the Disarmament Commission. Confident of his ability to successfully guide the deliberations of the Commission, I would like to assure him of my delegation's full cooperation in his conduct of our deliberations.

As usual, my delegation is of the opinion that the Disarmament Commission, as a deliberative body on

disarmament matters, has an important role to play in making in-depth analyses of the issues and developing norms and guidelines for international arms control. My delegation wishes to make the following observations. The 2000 session of the Disarmament Commission is the first to take place in the new millennium and is supposed to inspire positive changes in a world that is still characterized by rising challenges and a lack of tranquility. Consensus in the Disarmament Commission on certain issues can have an encouraging impact on disarmament negotiations elsewhere, especially in the Conference on Disarmament, which has been deadlocked for three years on the question of its programme of work. The successful conclusion of the sixth Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), held in April and May of this year, has provided further impetus to advance the complex process of disarmament. To the satisfaction of all, the Review Conference produced a Final Document with a paragraph containing an unequivocal commitment from the nuclear-weapon States to eliminate their nuclear arsenals. The historic 1996 Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice undoubtedly crafted a course of action by telling us to pursue the objective of the complete elimination of nuclear weapons. Following that Opinion, it has become obvious that ridding the world of nuclear weapons is an obligation devolving on us from the provisions of the NPT.

In the field of disarmament, we need to be guided by our desire for the common good of mankind. The disarmament process can be advanced only by ensuring that parochial interests do not prevail over collective interests. Threats to international security can be better dealt with through our common endeavours.

Notwithstanding the fact that my delegation's preference would have been for stronger language in the agenda item relating to nuclear disarmament, the Disarmament Commission's agreement to discuss ways and means to achieve nuclear disarmament clearly underscores the priority accorded to the issue of nuclear disarmament since the first session of the General Assembly. Despite the serious setbacks that global non-proliferation regimes have suffered, including the nuclear tests in South Asia in May 1998, the international community can take some solace from the fact that the moratorium on nuclear testing has been maintained. We hope to build on the conducive environment of nuclear restraint to make further progress in the field of disarmament.

Complexities have been added to the issue of conventional disarmament with the financing of the illegal arms trade by drugs and other questionable sources of funds. Paradoxically, the development of technology has also enhanced the lethality of the small arms that are most frequently used in today's wars. More concerted efforts are needed to stem the proliferation of such arms. It is heartening to note that the preparatory process has already begun for the convening of the 2001 United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in all its Aspects.

Confidence-building measures have a positive role to play in furthering the process of disarmament. In this regard, the activities performed by United Nations regional centres to promote regional disarmament in different parts of the world are worth mentioning here. Nepal, as host to the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific, feels satisfied at the fact that the Centre has been able to make a useful contribution towards promoting peace and disarmament. My delegation sincerely hopes that the operations of the Centre in Kathmandu will receive attention and support from the international community, and that financial support for the Centre's substantive activities will continue to increase.

The road ahead of the Disarmament Commission is not smooth, in view of the diverse stakes involved, but, given the strong political will demonstrated during the sixth NPT Review Conference, there is no reason why consensus cannot be built for nuclear and conventional disarmament, however challenging that may be.

Mr. Itzhaki (Israel): My delegation had planned to deliver a very long statement addressing all the issues before the Commission, but having listened to some of the statements made earlier we have decided to make the following brief statement.

I wish to congratulate the Chairman and the other members of the Bureau on their assumption of their posts. As they preside over these important deliberations, we shall extend our full cooperation throughout. This is the first such session of the new millennium, and it comes with the promise of a new era of peace and coexistence.

Israel has actively participated in the deliberations of the Disarmament Commission out of its belief in the value of addressing the various arms-control and disarmament issues in a professional and constructive manner. It is therefore most unfortunate that the representative of Egypt chose to deliver remarks that injected political considerations into this forum. For that reason, Israel chooses not to engage in a confrontational exchange, and therefore not to respond to the remarks of the representative of Egypt. Instead, we hope that a positive and constructive tone can be restored and maintained throughout the remainder of these deliberations.

The Acting Chairman (*spoke in Spanish*): We have thus concluded our two days of general exchange of views. I would like to remind delegations that the Working Groups will begin to meet tomorrow. I wish every success to delegations, as well as to the two persons who will preside over the work of the groups.

The meeting rose at 5.10 p.m.